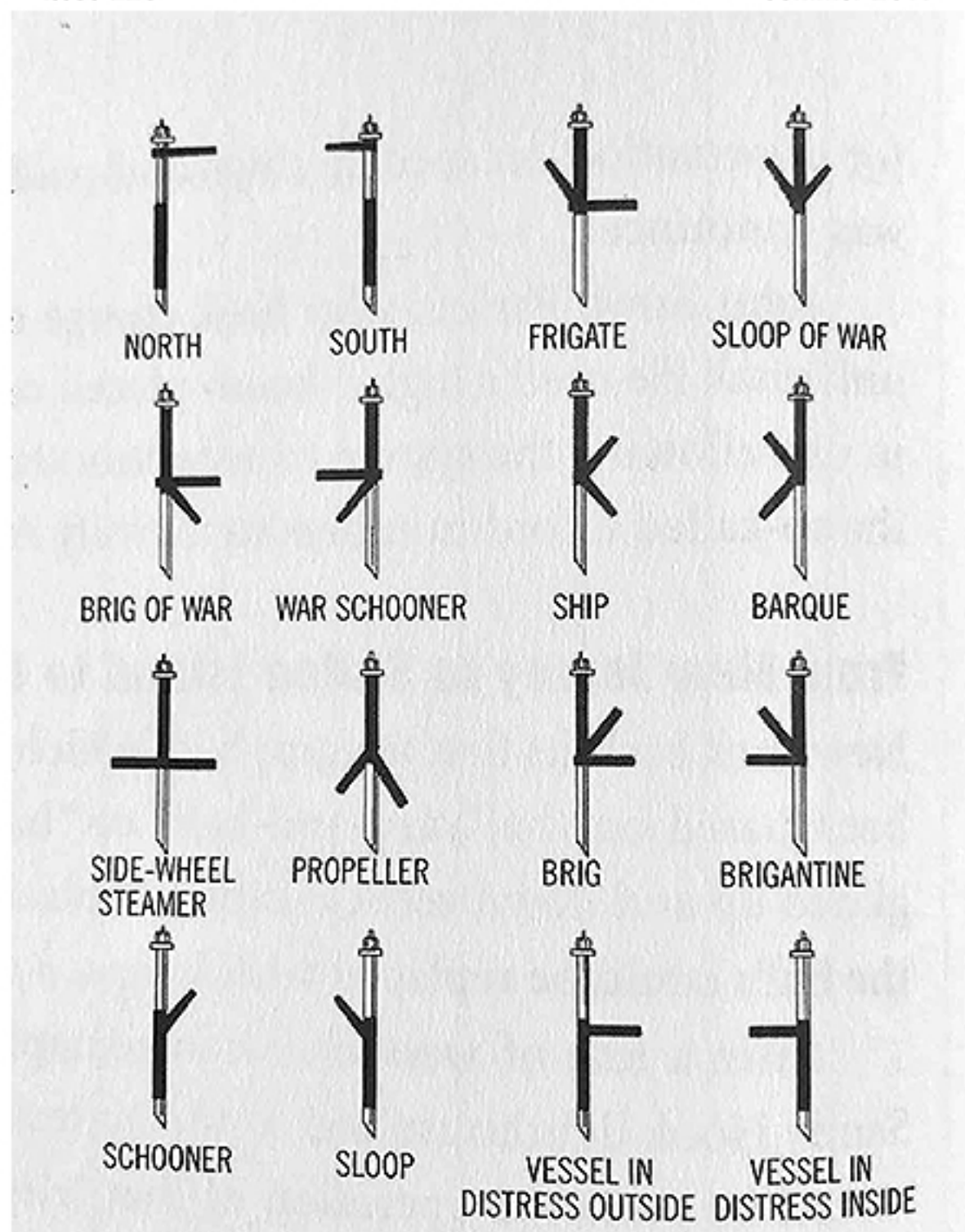


The Semaphore

A Publication of the TELEGRAPH HILL DWELLERS

Issue 226

Summer 2019



SEMAPHORE SIGNALS — THEY PUT
THE "TELEGRAPH" IN TELEGRAPH HILL

WHAT'S IN A NAME

by George Schumm

From 1956 to 1967, this publication was the *Telegraph Hill Bulletin*, then the *Telegraph Hill Semaphore* beginning with the spring of 1967, and only later baptized *The Semaphore*. The word ‘*Semaphore*’ here references the early, semaphore-based telegraph system designed by Lt. John King Duer of the U.S. Navy’s Pacific Coast Squadron in 1849. It was installed the following year at what is now the site of Coit Tower, which afforded an advantageous view of the bay. (Hence the name ‘Telegraph Hill,’ that being the period designation for any prominence on which a semaphore station was located.) The purpose of the system was to broadcast information about ships approaching the port of San Francisco.

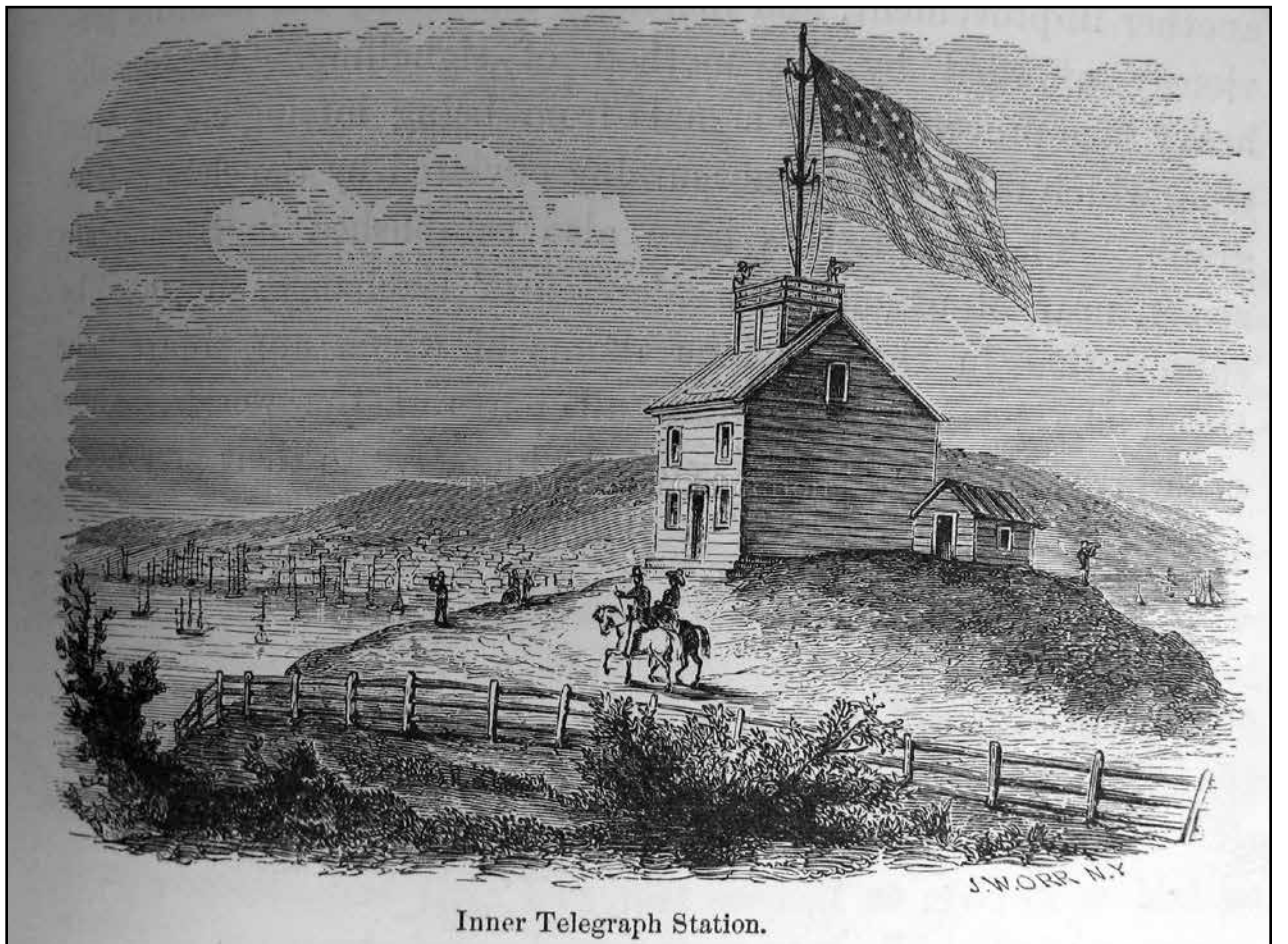
At the time, our elevation was still known officially by its Spanish name ‘Loma Alta’ (‘High Hill’) and by locals as ‘Goat Hill.’ Duer’s first choice we were not. He initially tried building his signal station over on Russian Hill. But his equipment and documents relating to the project were lost in a fire, and he subsequently failed to obtain the financial support needed to proceed at that locale. Were it not for this mishap, Russian Hill today would probably be called ‘Telegraph Hill.’ And we, perhaps, ‘Goat Hill Dwellers.’

Two local businessmen, George Sweeny and Theodore Baugh, took over operation of Duer’s structure (the “inner” station) in late 1850 or early 1851. They promptly built another tower (the “outer” station) at Point Lobos just beyond the Golden Gate to accommodate a growing demand for even earlier news of shipping traffic. The inner station alone could gather and transmit information only on vessels as they entered the bay.

The semaphore system employed was nothing more than a long pole sporting two pairs of rotating arms controlled by ropes. The upper pair was used to signal north or south, presumably the direction of approach. Configurations of the lower pair would indicate type of vessel or ship in need of assistance. In addition, raised flags were used to identify the nationality of a ship or if it belonged to the Pacific Mail or Vanderbilt Independent lines.

News about arriving vessels would be encoded in this fashion at the outer station. Via telescope, the signals were relayed to the inner one and replicated on *its* tower. From there the news was then transmitted downtown to Sweeny and Baugh’s Merchants’ Exchange, a clearinghouse for shipping information. Members could thus learn what sorts of vessels were on their way even *before* they crossed the Golden Gate.

One might also have a good idea of their cargos.



Station at Telegraph Hill.

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Sweeny and Baugh were in contact with shipping companies around the world and often knew when vessels were expected, as well as what they were slated to be carrying. Any uncertainty was settled upon arrival in port. Agents of the Exchange rowed out to anchored ships to check their identities and manifests. Information gathered at this point could still be in the nature of useful advance warning, since vessels sometimes remained moored offshore for a few days before being able to unload.

In Issue 26, the first to include ‘*Semaphore*’ in the title, one reads that just as Duer’s system heralded approaching ships and thus news from all corners of the globe, it was only appropriate to use the name in a publication devoted to delivering news from all corners of Telegraph Hill.

Of course, *heralding* the news—“Hark, cometh news!”—is not *delivering* it, so the analogy here between semaphore system and paper doesn’t quite work. But insofar as they’re both conveyors of information, playing similar roles, use of ‘*Semaphore*’ in the title is apt nonetheless.

The inner station, a Hill landmark, was one of the

best-known structures in town and one of the most important—for its brief working life, anyway.

Before 1848, San Francisco was little more than an isolated outpost on the West Coast. Ship sightings were sporadic. Each new one must have been a cause for celebration, the residents just grateful for the prospect of resupply.

With the discovery of gold at Sutter’s Mill, all this changed. Ships now appeared in large numbers, including from the Far East, often clogging the port and bringing more residents and goods. (Some 500 vessels alone were abandoned as crews jumped ship to seek their fortunes.) The population rose from a couple thousand or fewer to 25,000 by 1850, increasing to nearly 35,000 just two years later.

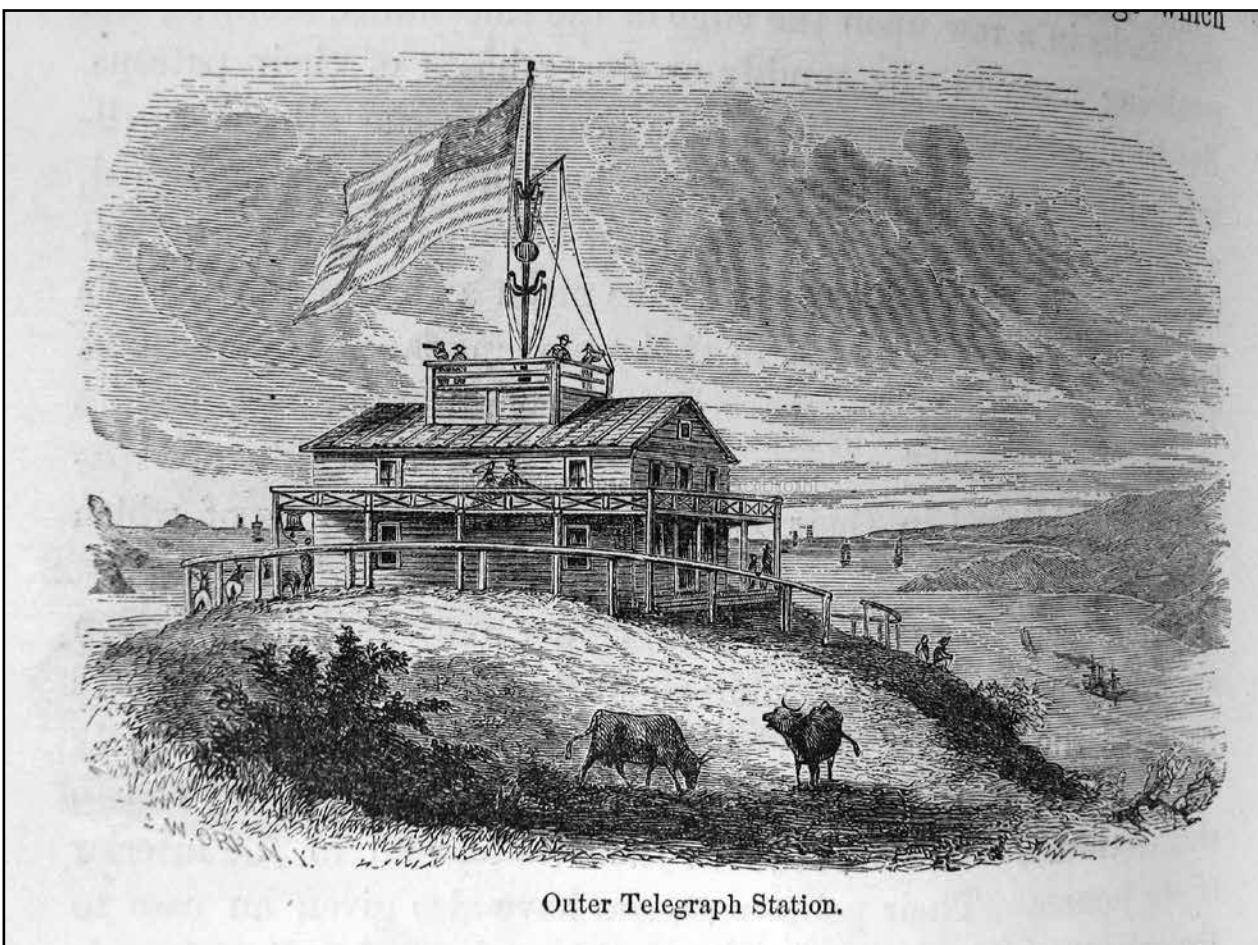
With this population explosion was born a genuine economy subject to the laws of supply and demand. A new shipload of widgets generally meant prices for widgets would drop. Sweeny and Baugh understood this and knew that every wholesaler, merchant, financier, and speculator in town would desire information on arriving ships and their cargos, the earlier the better, as no one wants to overpay for widgets. Our station on the Hill was key here, facilitating business dealings that otherwise would have been a rank gamble.

The station didn’t just impact commerce but also served as a call to action.

Sidewheel steamers (two arms straight out) were always a crowd favorite. But with the display of the insignia for Pacific Mail Steam Ship Company, the chief mail carrier between East and West Coasts, huge throngs would gather on the bay side of the Hill in eager anticipation and form lines blocks long at the Post Office. And call to action it certainly would have been with the posting of a signal for ship in distress (one arm straight to the right for outside the Golden Gate, one straight to the left for inside).

On a foggy day, Sweeny and Baugh’s semaphore system was useless. The inner station couldn’t see the outer. And even on a clear day, although it did the trick, the system was clunky to operate. So, in September 1853, the partners installed an electronic telegraph at the outer station, permitting direct communication to downtown, fog be damned. The inner station was thereby rendered obsolete, though it remained in place—largely as a taproom—until the winter of 1870/71 when the structure was toppled in a storm.

The publication to which Duer’s station has also lent its name, however, has endured—more than sixty years now and semaphore-like, still broadcasting, being read, promoting local enterprise, and a prompt for civic engagement. Even on a foggy day.



Station at Pt. Lobos.

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PRESIDENT'S CORNER

by Stan Hayes
President@thd.org

Well, here I am. Not my usual Planning & Zoning Report. A new spot—the President's Corner. To all of you, thanks for the opportunity to be president of this wonderful organization once again. Twice before I was president, in 2015 and 2016. Maybe this time I'll finally get it right.

You're the ones who make THD possible. Because you have THD's back, THD can have yours. Together, working to make Telegraph Hill, North Beach, and the Northeast Waterfront better. Stewards of the Hill, for everyone, everywhere who loves this special place, following our mission statement to Beautify and Improve, Build Community, Preserve and Protect Unique Character, Celebrate History and Traditions, Engage in City Affairs, and when needed, Stand Up for the Hill.

This is our 65th anniversary. Telegraph Hill Dwellers was founded in 1954, making us one of the oldest neighborhood organizations in San Francisco. We may be turning 65 this year, but we're not retiring. We're just getting started. Because of you and your support. Working together to make this community a better place—not just for us but for everyone.

The North Beach Fair June 15-16 reminded me of all that we can accomplish working together. This year is not just the 65th anniversary of THD, it's the 65th anniversary of the first North Beach Fair.

That's not entirely a coincidence. There's a bond between THD, the North Beach business community, and the Fair stretching back 65 years to 1954.

North Beach civic leaders, including Peter Macchiarini and Herman Baker (both since honored by THD), wanted to start something new, a street fair, the first of its kind in the country. But, the Board of Supervisors had to approve the new fair, and the votes just weren't there.

That is, until a newly-formed neighborhood organization called the 'Telegraph Hill Dwellers' came forward to tell the Board how much neighbors supported the fair. That tipped the scale, and the Board of Supervisors voted to approve the new fair by the huge margin of a single vote.

THD accomplishments. Starting with that one thing 65 years ago, THD has accomplished much through the years since 1954. Here are just a few:

- 1954—Playing a key role getting City approval for the North Beach Fair, the first street fair in the country
- 1956, 1964—Preventing the construction of high-rise buildings on Telegraph Hill
- 1959, 1974—Promoting the enactment of the neighborhood's 40-foot height limit
- 1966, 1976—Blocking the construction of an underground parking garage beneath Washington

Square, preserving the mature trees in the park, and avoiding the loss of park land to garage entrances

- 1974—Opposing the extension of the Embarcadero freeway through North Beach as part of a proposed over-water bridge between San Francisco and Tiburon
- 1976—Developing the "A" Parking sticker program, later adopted citywide
- 1983—Supporting the creation of the Northeast Waterfront Historic District to preserve the warehouse district dating from the Gold Rush
- 1986—Creating the Telegraph Hill Historic District to preserve the largest concentration of pre-Earthquake residential dwellings in San Francisco
- 1986, 2007—Raising funds to protect and preserve permanently the Grace Marchant Garden from development
- 1986-2007—Conducting detailed surveys of the North Beach business district in 1986, 1999, and 2007
- 1986—Working to establish and update the North Beach Neighborhood Commercial District to preserve North Beach's unique character and small businesses
- 1995-1999—Planting 355 new street trees in North Beach and Telegraph Hill, in conjunction with Friends of the Urban Forest
- 2000, 2001, 2002—Initiating and supporting landmark designations for Washington Square Park (2000), City Lights Bookstore (2001), and the Colombo Building (2002)
- 2005—Supporting legislation to ban formula retail (chain) stores in North Beach
- 2011—Promoting the restoration and increased protection for Coit Tower, its historic murals, and Pioneer Park
- 2013—Working to prevent construction, through voter referendum, of a high-rise condo building on the waterfront at 8 Washington Street, across from the Ferry Building next to Sue Bierman Park
- 2014—Working to pass Proposition B, a ballot initiative requiring voter approval of any waterfront development that exceeds the existing height limits
- 2015, 2018—Conducting detailed surveys of the North Beach business district with North Beach Business Association
- 1956-present—Publishing *The Semaphore*, a quarterly publication telling the stories of Telegraph Hill, North Beach, and the Northeast Waterfront.

We've built community by holding hundreds of member events, including dinners, programs, and block parties. We've celebrated our history and traditions with hundreds of cultural events, including book read-

ings, poetry sessions, art displays, and lectures. In addition, ongoing activities include:

- Promoting designation of a North Beach Historic District to protect historic buildings
- Working with the business community to attract more small-scale neighborhood-serving businesses
- Working with neighbors, MUNI, and others to improve public transportation
- Ensuring that new development and building additions are in keeping with neighborhood scale and character
- Preserving affordable housing stock by opposing demolitions, conversions, and evictions
- Recording and preserving neighborhood memories through THD's Oral History Project
- Monitoring and advising the Port on new development on the northeastern waterfront
- Working with City departments to preserve and replace our urban forest – promoting a neighborhood tree-planting program
- Organizing "Town Hall" meetings, lectures and presentations on history, politics, planning, etc.

Whew! Imagine what new things THD and you will accomplish next!

As always, remember: To join or to get information about THD, come to our website at thd.org, or send an email to hello@thd.org.



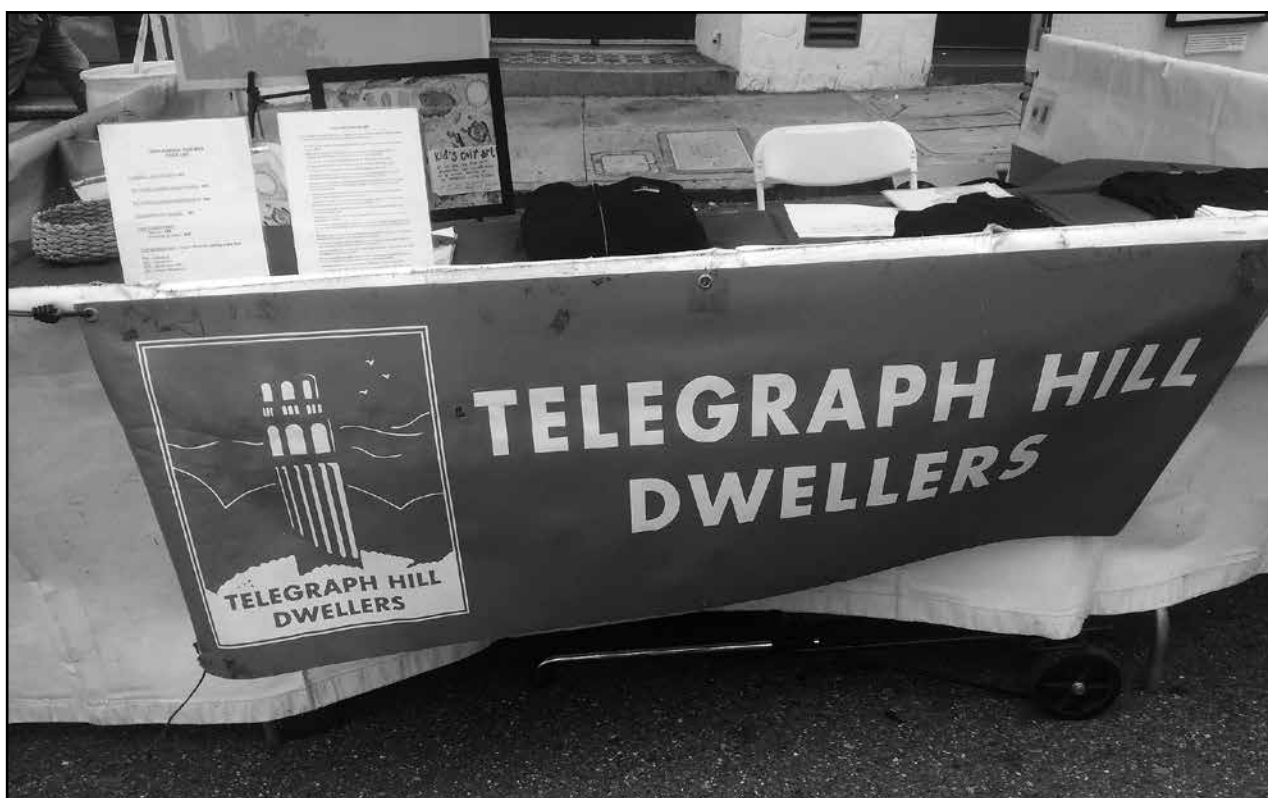
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THD materials on display at North Beach Fair.

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MEET NEW THD BOARD MEMBERS



© CHRIS THOLSTRUP

JULIA MURPHY

Julia Murphy was born in Santa Monica, CA and grew up in Knoxville, TN. After high school in New Hampshire, where she ski raced, Julia came back to Los Angeles for college. Immediately after graduation, she headed for San Francisco and lived in Bernal Heights. After business school in Chicago, she found her dream home in Telegraph/ North Beach where she has lived for 17 years. She loves the neighborhood charm and strong community she lives in, especially walking down the streets always greeting friends and business owners.

Julia is an investment professional with 17 years of energy and finance experience across utilities, private equity, and sustainable investments. She built a new sustainable investment firm (energy, ag, water, and waste) and now works for investment firms and operating companies. Previously, she was treasurer of the infrastructure fund and led the \$9B PG&E utility refinancing. Julia is on the Board of the Women in Cleantech & Sustainability; she co-chairs the Career Development Committee.

When not working, Julia loves the outdoors, triathlons, skiing, sailing, and cooking. She loves to travel and explore the Bay Area with her husband. Fun facts: Julia did shark research in South Africa, and she's a five-time Alcatraz Escapee (triathlon). She is passionate about the neighborhood, and she wants to work to increase community involvement in and knowledge of THD.



PHOTO COURTESY PATRICE

PATRICE IGNACIO MOLL

Patrice and her husband Juergen have enthusiastically lived just steps from Coit Tower for nine years; they moved to Telegraph Hill as newlyweds. Juergen is originally from Germany, and Patrice is a native San Franciscan, born at Kaiser Hospital on Geary Street. In her youth, she spent time in North Beach visiting her cousin whose father-in-law owned a tailor shop on Stockton Street. Patrice believes in keeping it local. You will often see her zipping around the neighborhood on her way to Yoga and Barre classes at Glow, buying treats at Little Vine, or dining at some of her favorite restaurants in North Beach.

Patrice has worked as a Sales Executive for a major telecommunications company since joining as an intern while attending the University of San Francisco for her undergraduate studies and later for business school. She is thrilled to be serving on the board of THD to contribute her most valuable skills: organizing events and social gatherings.

Patrice loves adventure and travel. She has climbed the highest mountain in Southeast Asia, Mount Kinabalu in Malaysia, and has run the Midnight Sun Marathon in the Arctic Circle. She is also a serious student of wine and travels with Juergen and friends to wine regions all over Europe for her 'studies.' So it should all work out to the neighborhood's benefit that she is a great sharer of stories and loves a good party!



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RACHEL RODRIGUEZ

I'm super excited to be a new THD board member and eager to get to know all of you better through our upcoming events. Although raised in midtown Manhattan, above my family's Irish Pub, I fortunately made the move to this magical and inspiring city in 1997.

I have had the pleasure of living in multiple neighborhoods in San Francisco over the past 22 years and raising my daughter Lilly (age 20), here. She's a CCSF "free city" grad transitioning to San Francisco State this fall to study theater.

Without a doubt, the pinnacle of my housing life in San Francisco has been moving here to North Beach, joining your community, and having the privilege to share all this with my partner Charlie (also a social worker). I am a social worker with 16 years' experience in this city working with individuals experiencing homelessness, developmental disabilities, serious mental health conditions, and substance use disorders. I co-founded and run a small non-profit in the Tenderloin.

I love getting involved in local politics and issues facing our City. I hope to bring some of that commitment, as well as my exciting life as a cocktail waitress in some of our most famous music venues in SF—every social worker needs a side hustle, right?—to the programs and events THD is planning for this unique and historic community.



What can we do together as a community to end homelessness?

- Advocate for policy solutions in the Federal, State, and City governments which foster trust, integrity, and respect.
- Call or use the 311 mobile app
- Please support our work with a donation

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DISTRICT 3 SUPERVISOR REPORT

by Supervisor Aaron Peskin
aaron.peskin@sfgov.org

A little over a year ago, I received an urgent request from parents at a District 3 elementary school to support the restoration of funding for a para-educator (special teacher's aide) – partly because she does incredible work with a population that depends on her expertise, but partly because she was already struggling to stay in San Francisco with its ever-escalating rents. That same year, two teachers living in rent-restricted housing came to me seeking help negotiating extensions to their affordable leases after a new investment company announced it would be tripling rents once the building's 'affordable-rent' agreement expired. This past year on 'Walk to School Day,' another longtime and beloved elementary school teacher pulled me aside to ask for my help: After years of living in her rent-controlled housing, she was being evicted.

This is typical of much of the housing in District 3, whose neighborhoods are some of the oldest and densest in the entire city. Rental housing continues to be gobbled up by speculative owners and flipped for massive profit. Although I've authored several of the strongest tenant protections San Francisco has, including reforms to 'Owner-Move-In Evictions' and 'Landlord Pass-Throughs,' keeping tenants in their homes is tough when you don't own the land.

In 2015, then-Supervisor Jane Kim put a ballot initiative before the voters that ultimately overwhelmingly passed, setting city standards for affordable housing priorities on public land. Her assertion at the time was that taxpayer-owned land should be developed by and for the people – and that the free land value should not inure to private developers for the development of market-rate housing. With limited public land to develop on, we should be recapturing value for the public good.

This past June, Supervisors Matt Haney, Sandra Lee Fewer, Shaman Walton, and I put forward a ballot measure for this coming November's election. Drafted

in partnership with the Teachers Union (United Educators of SF) and affordable housing developers, the proposal's co-sponsors, excepting me, are all former Board of Education Presidents. The **Affordable Homes for Educators & Families NOW Act** would streamline the review and zoning process for 100% Affordable Housing projects, as well as create a new category of affordable housing that includes middle-income teachers. These "Educator Housing" projects could be dedicated for early childhood educators, para-educators, tenured teachers, and SFUSD social workers—all because they would be on public land owned by the SF Unified School District—and therefore ensuring placement of educators by virtue of their employment. Same goes for City College properties: CCSF would be able to leverage its de facto "landlord" status to house CCSF faculty and staff.

Owning the land is only half of the battle! We also have to make sure that the projects are feasible by housing a wide cross-section of employees—ranging in income levels from para-educators who make around 35% of the Area Median Income to teachers and SFUSD administrators who might make closer to 150% of the Area Median Income. Educators don't want to compete with each other for limited housing, and public school land should be prioritized citywide in every district for the maximum amount of affordable units that we can build to keep our teachers and principals serving the children they love. Because 100% Affordable Housing projects developed by non-profits on city land only serve residents making up to 120% of the Area Median Income (and are eligible to anyone who meets those income requirements, not just teachers), we have worked with affordable housing developers and educators to craft a proposal targeting the widest possible group of educators—*without* making the units market-rate. These are real people, and their displacement has real impacts on our neighborhoods.

To fully develop 'Educator Housing' will take a little more investment on the City side. For the first time in the City's history, the Board of Supervisors has

AFFORDABLE HOMES FOR EDUCATORS & FAMILIES NOW!



Art Agnos and Aaron Peskin at THD annual meeting

© DAVID LIPKIN

dedicated \$20 million to affordable 'Educator Housing' in the \$600 million affordable- housing bond that will be before voters in November. We have also invested in a new category for senior housing because both of these groups require additional public subsidy.

The first step is to maximize our public land for the public good, as the voters mandated through Proposition K, which means prioritizing deeply-affordable housing. Streamlining of project review and expedited rezoning of these public lands to allow housing is next, and investing in the first-ever 'Educator Housing Fund' is the third key to this plan. The Affordable Homes for Educators & Families NOW Act will help to create a new low- and middle-income program that can always be tweaked later at the Board of Supervisors, if SFUSD and CCSF find that there are changes that will benefit this evolving pilot program. That's the flexibility of an initiative ordinance that understands policy should be a living document reflecting the changing landscape of our city. The Board of Supervisors is committed to continuing this work in partnership with those who should be at the center of this policy-making: our teachers and our affordable housing providers.

Big Budget Wins for Neighborhood

In July, we passed the largest spending budget in San Francisco history, more than \$12 billion, \$44 million of which the Board of Supervisors funneled into citywide and district priorities such as homelessness, street-cleaning, increasing our tree canopy and senior and tenant protections. For North Beach specifically, I've allocated funding to kick-start an arts & culture small business fund and expand our neighborhood tree replacement fund, as well as expand the Bigbelly trash can program I funded last year.

Finally, after fruitful negotiations with the Mayor's Budget Office, I was able to fund increased support for workforce development at North Beach Citizens, support services for our seniors at NextVillage, the return of a Beacon Center at Francisco Middle School through Tel-Hi Neighborhood Center, and a fulltime staff for Joe DiMaggio Clubhouse. (Many thanks to the advocacy of parents like Martha Mahony on this request!) The Board of Supervisors also included \$52 million of excess property tax funding for a special Educator Reserve Fund in this budget, which divvies up \$13 million for SFUSD teacher wages, \$3.5 million for middle-school mental health centers, \$13.4 million for early childcare educator stipends and \$9 million in childcare subsidies to serve hundreds of children on waitlists. (You may even know some!) In partnership with President Yee, I've also co-sponsored the first-ever "SOS Fund" — \$5 million for senior rental subsidies to help low-income seniors whose fixed incomes disqualify them from affordable senior housing.

All in all, it was truly a budget that reflected our values as a city and a village of neighborhoods. Sign up for my newsletter at www.sfbos.org/supervisor-peskin for more updates like these!

See you in the neighborhood,

Aaron



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ITALIAN-AMERICAN ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION: YOU CAN HELP!

by Judy Irving

Fifteen interviews with North Beach Italian-Americans conducted by Judith Robinson between 1996 and 2004 have been languishing unheard and under-appreciated at the Bancroft Library for all these years. No longer! The Telegraph Hill Dwellers paid to have all of them digitized from cassette tapes, and now we're looking for volunteers to transcribe these fascinating bits of history. Katherine Petrin, an architectural historian and THD member, is a friend of the Luchetti family and wrote this about interviewee **Cora Luchetti**:

Cora Pinelli (Paolinelli) Luchetti was born in San Francisco's Western Addition on June 11, 1900, to parents who immigrated from Lucca, Italy. Her family owned a produce market on Fillmore Street. She was six years old when the 1906 earthquake hit the City. At the time, her father was working at the wholesale produce market (now the site of the Golden Gateway) when a brick wall toppled and killed him.

Cora married into a market-owning family. Her husband, Arthur Luchetti, ran Luchetti Brothers market on Arguello Boulevard. Her brother, Ralph

(Babe) Pinelli, was a star baseball player and later major league umpire. Cora raised her twin daughters, Beverly Luchetti Desmond and Barbara Luchetti Bosque, in the Richmond District. For more than 75 years, Cora was active in various civic and religious organizations, including the Italian women's auxiliaries of North Beach. Cora never missed the annual commemoration of the 1906 earthquake at Lotta's Fountain when she would let Herb Caen know she was ready to be interviewed. Cora died in 2000, at age 100 and a half, her lifetime spanning the entire twentieth century.

Katherine has volunteered to transcribe Cora's interview. Others in this priceless collection are in need of volunteer transcribers, too. Pick your favorite person from Robinson's list below and I'll send you the digital file. We will make the interview transcripts widely available (San Francisco Library, Internet Archive, etc.) and YOU will have helped!

List of Other Interviewees:

Peter Macchiarini, modernist jeweler (Macchiarini Creative Design on Grant Avenue, now run by his son Danny and granddaughter Emma and founder of the North Beach Fair for artisans

Stella Patri, famous book designer

Dante Benedetti, owner of 'New Pisa' restaurant for years, longtime baseball coach for the University of San Francisco, and mentor to many young men

John Valentini, owner of the Cavalli Italian Bookstore (Note: Valentini's interview might already have been transcribed.)

Reba Hudson, first gay woman bartender in San Francisco (1960s?)

Lillian Baldassari, long-time North Beach resident (might have known Joe DiMaggio as a youth)

John Beviaqua, from a fishing family

Mateo Ciuffreda, owner of the jewelry store Matteucci's with the street clock on Columbus Avenue, daughter still living

Frances Farmuggia, long-time resident (might have known Joe DiMaggio)

Alfredo Pisciotta, upholsterer, father of Rita Pisciotta

Ruth Ricco, long-time resident, homesteader in '4 corners' area of Western U.S.

Jimo Perini, accomplished photographer, born in S.F. in 1926 and died at age 91 in 2017

Peter San Filippo, born in North Beach, worked in the produce market

Joe Zambon



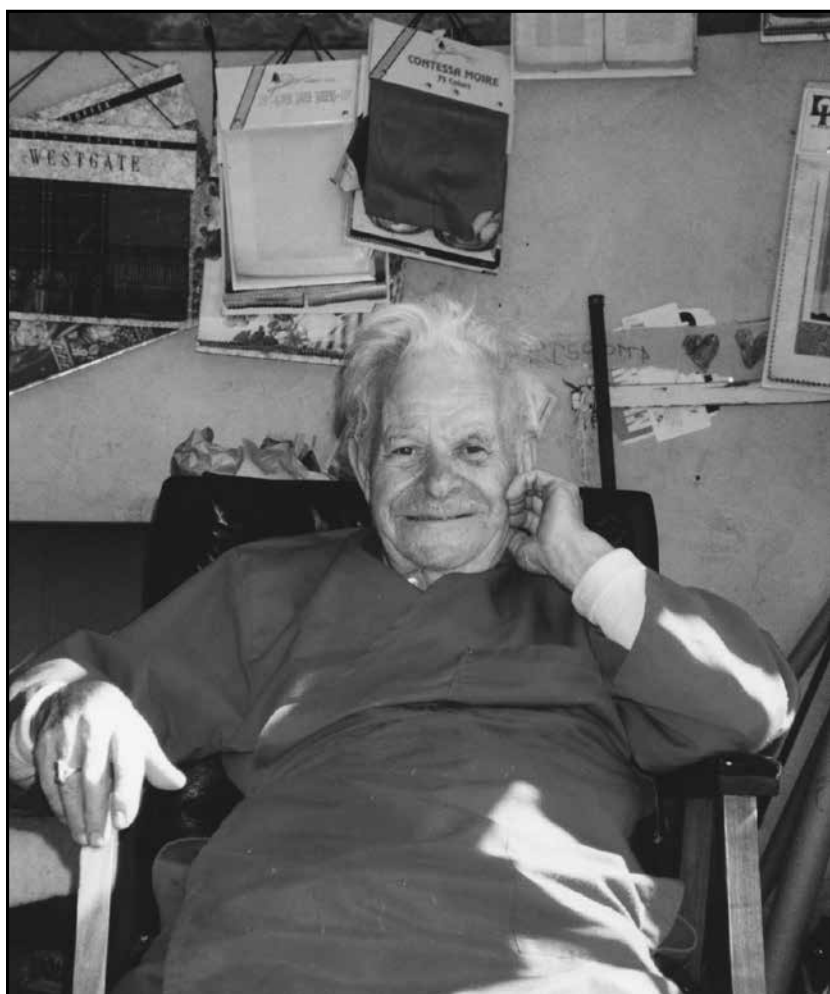
Dante Benedetti looks at photographs of Joe DiMaggio with Babe Ruth hanging on the wall of his restaurant New Pisa in the North Beach section of San Francisco Monday, March 8, 1998. Benedetti, who played baseball with DiMaggio as a child, recalled that Joe was "always picked first for teams" and that he was "the best baseball player that ever lived." (Baseball legend Joe DiMaggio died earlier that morning in 1998.)

(AP PHOTO/BEN MARGOT)



Cora Luchetti, 1906 earthquake survivor, prepares to add some gold spray paint to the famous hydrant that saved much of the city from fire.

(PHOTO COURTESY LUCHETTI FAMILY)



Alfredo Pisciotta in his upholstery shop at 2060 Stockton Street. He and his wife arrived in North Beach in 1938 and bought their home at 2048 Stockton the following year.

(PHOTO COURTESY RITA PISCIOTTA)

Save the Date!

Sunday, October 6th, 2019
11 AM to 3 PM

Picnic on the South Lawn
at Coit Tower!

*Celebrating THD's 65th Anniversary
1954-2019*

For more information or to volunteer,
contact: social@thd.org



SOCIAL & PROGRAM REPORT

by Rachel Rodriguez and Patrice Ignacio Moll,
Committee Co-Chairs
rachel.rodriguez@thd.org and patrice.ignaciomoll@thd.org

This past June, the THD Social & Program Committee held our first planning meeting of this new board term. We had a great turnout and generated an exciting and varied slate of events we will be organizing for this coming year. Plans include the new member mixer this month, the THD 65th Anniversary Celebration at Coit Tower, a bocce ball tournament and picnic, a neighborhood historical walking tour, an evening of poetry and book readings, an educational panel focused on homelessness, family-focused activities, an evening at the SF Symphony, community yoga class with brunch, our annual holiday party, and many more. We are seeking members who are ready to participate in creating our upcoming events. Please join us and share your ideas, interests, and talents with this community. One of our goals for the Social & Program Committee is to build and diversify our membership and events, reflective of your ideas and areas of interest for fun, entertainment, community building, activism, volunteerism, health and wellness, and extended learning opportunities.

One of our next scheduled events is an evening



Social and Program Committee meeting at Caffè Greco

© DENNIS HEARNE

at Davies Symphony Hall for the All San Francisco Concert on Thursday, September 5. This is an annual special event for non-profit groups in the City. At \$12 per ticket, what a bargain! It's been a very popular event for THD members, and we have a limited supply of tick-

ets. Please email us at social@thd.org to secure your spot.

Use that same address to let us know your ideas and how you'd like to be involved. Looking forward to getting to know all of you better in the months and years ahead.



PLANNING & ZONING REPORT

by Nancy Shanahan and Mary Lipian, Committee Co-Chairs
nancy.shanahan@thd.org mary.lipian@thd.org

Telegraph Hill, North Beach, and the Northeast Waterfront are the most historic and enchanting parts of San Francisco's fabled heart. That's why one of THD's primary missions for the past 65 years has been to preserve and protect our special places. THD's members have written letters, sent emails, attended meetings, and spoken up for our neighborhood at hearings of the Board of Supervisors, the Planning Commission, the Historic Preservation Commission, and others. As a part of these efforts, THD's Planning & Zoning Committee meets to review and comment on proposed projects and legislation initiatives that might affect our neighborhood. Remember, *any* THD member is invited to these meetings: Get on our email list by letting us know of your interest at hello@thd.org.

At the Planning & Zoning Committee in April, several projects were presented and reviewed.

•17 Osgood

Project Architect Jonathan Pearlman presented a revised proposal for the 2,600 square foot, three-story, two-unit historic building, one of the 'Old Ohio Street Houses' listed on the National Register of Historic Places and a part of the Jackson Square Extension Historic District. The P&Z Committee had reviewed and commented on a previous proposal to more than double the size of this existing historic building through a two-story vertical addition together with a sizeable horizontal rear addition.

Responding to the Committee's concerns that the project would significantly impact the historic building, the project team returned with a revised proposal that would minimize exterior changes to the building while adding a new architecturally-compatible structure on the west portion of the site, facing Bartol Street. The project as revised would provide three residential units.

•875 Sansome

Demolition and construction on this site were parts of a proposal introduced by Suheil Shatara,

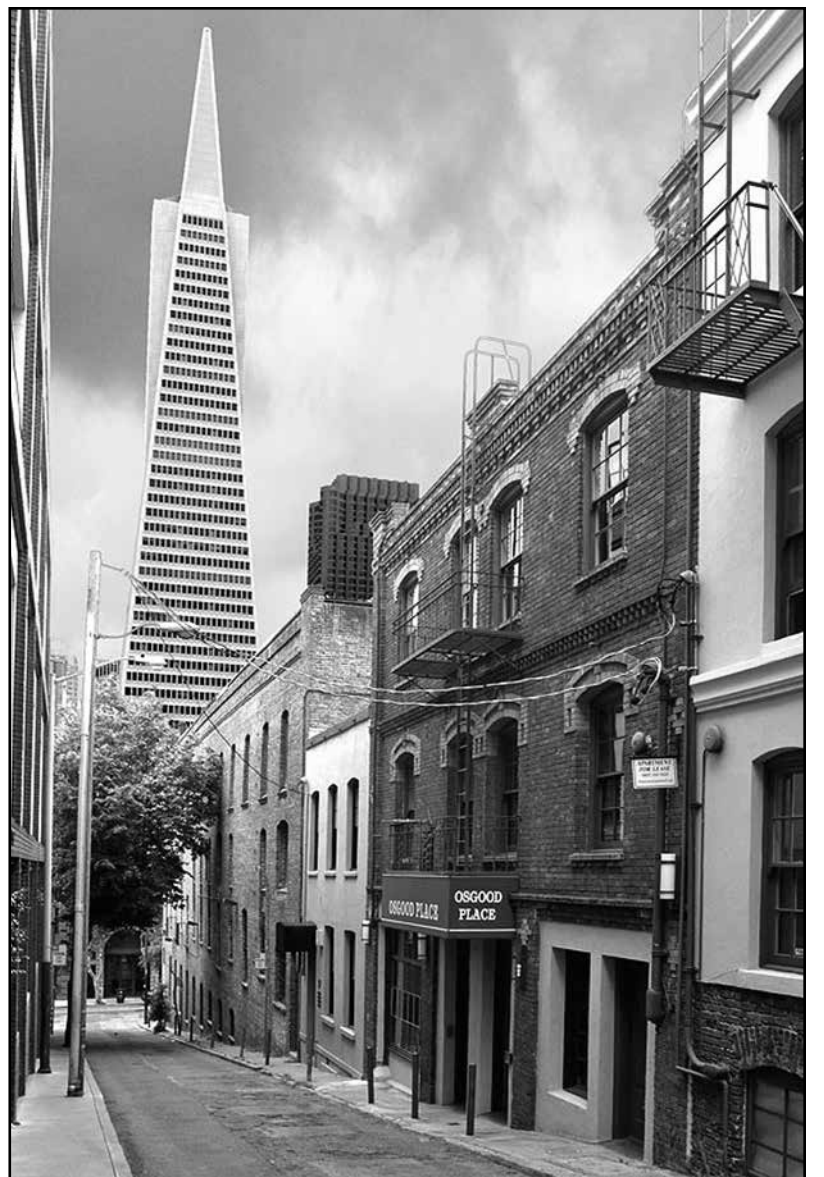
Project Architect. There is currently an office building and, like 17 Osgood, 875 Sansome is also within the Jackson Square Extension Historic District. Under this proposal, the developers would construct a new six-story, mixed-use building consisting of retail space on the ground floor, office space on the second and third floors, and nine dwelling units on the fourth, fifth, and sixth floors. Only two of the dwelling units would be "affordable," while the remaining units would be market-rate and, therefore, not financially accessible to most families. The project sponsor also plans to use the State Density Bonus provisions to avoid the City's open space requirements.

The Committee offered several comments. First, consistent with THD's support for the development of affordable housing in the neighborhood, we urged the project sponsor to explore ways to increase the number of below-market-rate units on this site. In addition, the Committee observed that because the proposed new building would exceed the height of the immediately adjacent buildings on Broadway and Sansome, as well as the prevailing heights in the Jackson Square District Extension, special consideration would be necessary to ensure compatibility with the height, scale, and design of buildings prevailing in the area.

•659 Union/1656 Powell

Although a representative for Red Bridge Partners LLC (the development company) was unavailable, the Committee discussed the proposed plans to rebuild the fire-ravaged historic building, including potential rooftop additions to increase the number of residential units. The building formerly contained 28 apartments over ground-floor retail

spaces; the developer is considering increasing the number of units to 60, using the State Density Bonus law. The Committee is committed to ensuring the preservation of the existing historic building in its prominent location on Washington Square.



Old Ohio Street Houses (National Register #79000535), 17-55 Osgood Place between Pacific and Broadway (near Sansome). Built 1900-1906.

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PARKS & TREES REPORT

by Don Raichle, Committee Chair
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After months of public workshops, debate, and the raising of many legitimate public concerns, significant construction projects have begun at two of Telegraph Hill's most cherished open spaces. At Washington Square, the fences are up, and the majority of the park is closed for six months until the completion of irrigation and drainage improvements. At the top of the Hill, Pioneer Park is experiencing extensive tree pruning and removal intended to improve the health of the remaining trees and re-establish long-obstructed views to the waterfront and San Francisco Bay. In both cases, the immediate reaction to the amount of construction can be jarring, particularly true for Pioneer Park where pruning work, which had been occurring slowly over the last year, has accelerated dramatically.

These maintenance projects are intended to improve the appearance, health, and safety of both parks. To date, the pros and cons and description of these proposed projects have been noted in my column in *The Semaphore*. If the projects are executed properly, these goals should be achieved. However, each is not off to an optimal beginning. In the case of Pioneer Park, the acceleration of the work occurred with limited notice to neighbors and resulting in considerable concern and confusion as to what was being done and why. In the case of Washington Square, within a week of the work starting, a tree was damaged. A further summary of this incident is provided below.

Washington Square:

THD has been working closely with other local neighborhood groups to obtain commitments from the City agencies involved in the work to improve stakeholder communication, adherence to schedules, quality control, and mitigation of local impacts. As an example, the Recreation and Parks Department (Rec/Park) has committed to expedite the construction schedule. Using a combination of early completion bonuses, financial penalties for schedule overruns, and other streaming practices, construction is now scheduled for six months instead of the initially estimated one year.

Actual construction related to the project includes:

- installation of a new irrigation system
- an extensive new drainage system
- new lawn
- replacement of poor soils with better draining soil
- new concrete paths in the same alignment as current paths but slopes adjusted to be ADA compliant
- replacement of several trees deemed unsafe with trees of the same species.

Not included in this work are the bollard and chain planting area barriers or the granite curbs that



An excavator ripped a large limb off this deodar cedar three days after Washington Square Park was closed.

© CRAIG HECKMAN

PARK IMPROVEMENTS ARE MOVING FORWARD



Pioneer Park tree maintenance project—view toward Alcatraz

© DON RAICHLE

were included in the playground project.

As construction proceeds, representatives of THD, the North Beach Business Association, Friends of Washington Square, and North Beach Neighbors are to be given regular updates which will be passed on to our memberships. The goal is that fiascos like the loss of the Canary Island Pine grove at the playground never happen again. Despite agency assurances, residents and local business remain anxious that past mistakes and poor oversight by the Department of Public



Pioneer Park tree maintenance project—view of hill below Coit Tower.

© DON RAICHLE

Works (DPW) and Rec/Park might occur again.

Unfortunately, that concern has proven to be well-founded. Within a week of work beginning at Washington Square, a branch was broken off of the large Cedar tree along Union Street by a backhoe. The good news, if anything could be considered good news related to this, is that the neighborhood groups' representatives were notified immediately, the tree was not irreparably harmed, those directly involved were removed from the project, and an on-site meeting with department officials and stakeholders was held to discuss how to avoid this ever happening again. Going forward, Rec/Park has committed to increased oversight of ongoing construction and regular updates to the concerned neighborhood groups. Since this incident occurred at the beginning of the project, it has resulted in an amplified awareness by Rec/Park that no further mistakes are acceptable.

While a separate project, the proposed replacement of the Ficus trees on Columbus Avenue adjacent to the park is scheduled to occur during the construction at the Washington Square. At publication, the final status of these trees is still unknown. Two appeals to halt their removal have been filed, one of which was done by THD. A hearing on these appeals has been postponed until September 11 to allow for a possible settlement.

Pioneer Park:

A few weeks ago, I wandered up to Coit Tower and saw something that has been hidden for years. Standing at the edge of the parking circle around the

statue of Christopher Columbus, instead of a green wall of overgrown and unnaturally shaped Monterey Cypress trees, I saw the Golden Gate and Alcatraz. After doing some tentative trimming of trees over the last year, San Francisco's Rec/Park has suddenly begun extensive pruning and tree removal. At first, the result is shocking, given the number of trees taken down; however, when one observes how little canopy exists on the remaining trees, it becomes clear how necessary this thinning was. Monterey Cypress trees, when maintained properly and allowed to grow in their natural form, are immediately recognizable and among the most sculpturally beautiful trees in coastal California. For years, those surrounding Coit Tower have been pruned like hedges or ignored until unstable branches collapse or trees break apart, as was the case in May of this year when half of a mature Cypress broke off at the trunk during a storm.

Most of the Cypress removal has occurred midway down the northern slope below the parking lot. There trees had been repeatedly topped to create view corridors. As a result, what growth they produced was horizontal, leaving them to smother each other and prohibit the development of healthy canopies. At the top of the slope, the trees had historically been cut into from the side, again to open up view to the bay but with marginal success. The new pruning strategy along this row of trees opens up the canopy from below; so, instead of looking around the trees, one can see under and through them, creating a series of framed and filtered views.

It is unfortunate that once again a lack of maintenance over many years has required drastic action. But, if they are managed properly, these efforts will increase the health, appearance, and safety of these trees and the park as a whole. One action needed in the near term is re-vegetation of the slopes where the trees have been removed, particularly along the top of the slope and newly barren slopes. Planting medium-sized drought-tolerant shrubs will avoid erosion, improve the slope's appearance, and reintroduce some of the lost privacy screening desired by adjacent residents.



Tree planting in North Beach with (l. to r.) THD board member David Becker, Lee Hepner from Supervisor Peskin's office, Carla Short from the Bureau of Urban Forestry, and tree activist Patsy Fergusson.

© LEE HEPNER



FROM THE EDITOR

by Cap Caplan
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Some months ago, I injured my knee at the gym. Actually, it was my kneecap, but when hearing I might get a cane, my knee and leg joined in.

This report is not about my kneecap and its partners. It's about what I experienced as a temporarily disabled person here. I ventured out of my house, my knee and its cap letting me know just how they felt, cane or no cane. I walked slowly up the hill to North Beach, a journey Ace and I have enjoyed many times. Ace, an energetic basset hound (really!), had to stay home, because I couldn't negotiate the sidewalks and manage him. What do pet owners do, I wondered, unable to navigate outside or afford a dog walker.

I appreciated the yellow curb cuts at the street corners, though, in truth, they would be more helpful to wheelchair riders than those, like me, who had to focus carefully not to trip on the nubbins on the slope. Still, I was grateful not to have to step down off the curb.

As I hobbled along Columbus Avenue, I was dismayed by the tiny path occupied by restaurant tables and vendors' wares and, of course, people walking toward me, sharing the space. Pre-cane, I thought the scene quaint, a quintessential North Beach attraction. Now, I was just grateful this was an afternoon stroll. Trying this at night, when the revelry begins, would simply be out of the question.

I noticed when looking down, there were many cracks in the sidewalks. How easy to stub a toe or lose one's balance stepping over them. A North Beach resident told me of her foot caught by one of these cracks and falling forward, her face landing on a grate.

More than \$30,000 was spent on teeth implants and facial work. She, of course, asked the City for payment but was refused because "the crack wasn't deep enough for responsibility." (According to the response she received, a crack has to be at least two inches deep for that; this one—which is still there—was short by half an inch.) On the flip side, I encountered a man who told me of falling and the City's "magnificent response, sending paramedics in what seemed like only a minute." Well, that's reassuring, I mused. If I take a plunge, at least I'll get patched up quickly on my way to penury.

I applaud my colleague, Transportation Co-Chair David Becker, as he writes about the merits of bicycle riding (instead of driving) for benefit to health, congestion, and safety. Yet I can't help but worry about the elephant in the room—the reckless behavior of (too many)

CANES AND BIKES



Stockton Street sidewalk buckled and cracked by roots of long-gone tree

© DAVID LIPKIN

cyclists that has been tolerated (and is now entrenched) in this city. Are we not opening a Pandora's Box here?

With cane or without, I have narrowly avoided becoming a statistic at least ten times, as I was barely missed by bicycles whizzing down the hills on Stockton Street at high speed, ignoring stop signs, anything (cars, wheelchairs, pedestrians) in the way, and, most likely, unable to stop. And I'm hardly alone in this. Numerous neighbors report similar harrowing experiences.

On this little outing, however, it felt different in a way I hadn't anticipated. Pre-cane, though wary about crossing streets, I had some defensive options. One could simply wait on the curb or jump back if neces-

sary. But with the cane, once in the street, I was essentially a stationary target. How much worse must it feel for someone in a wheelchair!

The experience wasn't entirely bad. I was amazed by the response of pedestrians to those walking a little slower or crossing the street. I watched as a young man and woman approached an older person with a cane walking slowly in front of them. I heard "How can we help you?" and saw the woman hold out her arm.

My physical therapist said exercising in water would be helpful. So, I went to the pool and walked back and forth in the shallow end for 35 minutes. Boring! Puckered toes. But, mercifully, no crosswalks, no cracks.



TRANSPORTATION REPORT

by David Becker, Committee Co-Chair
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Our beautiful city is growing quickly, and our population has outgrown most of the available public transportation options. We feel the pain with overcrowded MUNI buses and trains, frustrating traffic, and ferry lines that loop around the Ferry Building.

We need improvements on all fronts: better and more reliable trains, dedicated bus lanes, and more ferries. Most of these improvements will take five to ten years to complete (as we see with the Central Subway project and the curiously forever-under-construction Van Ness Bus Rapid Transit).

There is one option which can help relieve traffic congestion and improve safety on our streets today. Try not to laugh: It's a bicycle.

From North Beach, most places are accessible within a 25-minute bike ride. This is comparable to taking an Uber. For similar trips, MUNI will often take twice as long. Bikes are a quick way to improve

BIKES AND PEDESTRIAN SAFETY

San Francisco's transportation infrastructure. With the addition of 'bike share,' such as BayWheels (Ford GoBikes), everyone can have quick and cheap access to transportation in our City.

You don't need to ride a bike to see the benefits. When your neighbor chooses to bike to work at rush hour, that person eases your commute by freeing up precious room on a bus or a train or removing a car from the road. By easing congestion, cyclists make everyone's commute a little easier. Best of all, by having more bikes on our streets, we make them safer for both cyclists and pedestrians. There is ample room to grow bike ridership here. There is no need to wait a decade for additional infrastructure. This is available to us today.

Often echoed: "We are not Amsterdam." Yes, unlike Amsterdam where it is rainy most of the year, we have the advantage of beautiful weather year-round. Our hills are a breeze since the advent of electric-assisted bikes. San Francisco is the perfect city for biking. People from Amsterdam will one day say with envy, "We're not San Francisco."

Every city resident is a pedestrian at some point in the day. Since my last Transportation Report, five more pedestrians have lost their lives, bringing us to a total of 10 thus far in 2019. Ten pedestrians have been struck by cars and have died in San Francisco.

The Transportation Committee has hosted SFMTA, Lyft, and BART with pedestrian safety as our top priority for discussion. We plan to continue meetings with Uber, MUNI, and many more representatives to help make our streets safer.

The SFMTA Pedestrian Safety Advisory Committee now has a strong advocate in Gabrielle Haug. She has done an excellent job promoting pedestrian safety in our neighborhood and continues to be an ally to help improve the conditions on our streets.

We can't accept dysfunctional streets that cater primarily to the safety of cars. We do not need grand visions of epic boulevards. We need one vision and a singular focus: pedestrian safety. Improving bike safety improves pedestrian safety. We need to ensure biking is safe in our neighborhood to help encourage more people to choose this option.



NORTH BEACH CITIZENS EXPANDS TEAM TO CLEAN STREETS

by Sharna Brockett

Over the last nine months, you might have noticed more people in the neighborhood wearing yellow vests and sweeping and collecting garbage off the streets. This group of busy workers is from North Beach Citizens' recently expanded Street Beautification Program.

North Beach Citizens (NBC), a local non-profit that helps homeless and low-income individuals, has swept North Beach's streets twice a week for the past 15 years.

In October 2018, NBC expanded the Program to five-days-a-week and increased its street cleaning team from seven to 20 people a day. As a result, the organization is on track to quadruple its garbage collection capabilities, from 2,819 bags collected in 2018 to more than 13,000 bags in 2019, with 6,761 bags of garbage collected by the end of June.

North Beach Citizens was founded in 2001 by filmmaker Francis Ford Coppola. Together with a group of residents and merchants, NBC utilizes the

talents and support of the local community to help San Francisco's homeless and low-income citizens find and stay in housing and get the support they need to rebuild their lives.

The Street Beautification Program helps its clients give back to the neighborhood as they learn valuable work skills. Team members receive a small stipend at the end of their 90-minute shifts. One of NBC's clients, Javier, was homeless, living on Broadway Street for many years after losing his janitorial job. NBC was able to help Javier find permanent housing and reconnect him with his mother before she passed away. An active member of the street beautification team, Javier today works and supervises many of the other team members. He says he appreciates the structure and stability the Program gives him.

Robert, another member of the team, believes that the Program is a good way for him to develop a consistent daily routine and learn how to work for an employer, including showing up on time. He relies on the Program to buy food for himself and his dog to eat at home in his single-room-occupancy (SRO) studio

in the Tenderloin.

As part of its Street Beautification Program, NBC also led efforts to add five Bigbelly waste and recycling stations into the neighborhood earlier this year. The Bigbelly stations keep waste and recycling contained, thus eliminating visible waste, windblown litter, overflows, and critter access. NBC partnered with the Office of Economic and Workforce Development, Mayor Breed, Supervisor Peskin, North Beach Neighbors, Telegraph Hill Dwellers, North Beach Business Association, and the Department of Public Works.

NBC also partnered with the Surfrider and Each Foundations to install and maintain 29 cigarette receptacles. Since August 2017, the agency has collected 120,00 cigarette butts that would have otherwise ended up on the streets.

To learn more about North Beach Citizens and donate, go to www.northbeachcitizens.org or call its Executive Director, Kristie Fairchild, at (415) 772-0918.



CENTRAL SUBWAY DELAYED: MORE CHINATOWN WOES

by Howard Wong, AIA, Committee Co-Chair
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As of June 2019, Chinatown Station is in the site-preparation mode, the Central Subway's opening scheduled for December 26, 2019. A *Chronicle* columnist asked me why the Chinatown Station wasn't "out of the ground" yet. I explained that independent Federal Transit Administration (FTA) reports predicted further delays, though nothing was being said publicly. So, I filed Public Records Requests to the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA). Uncovered was a letter from SFMTA to the FTA, requesting a deadline extension to May 26, 2020. Also uncovered was a Claims Log of potential additional costs totaling \$98 million—with many items unresolved.

Independent Federal Reports have more concerns. The Project Management Oversight Contractor describes strained relationships with the General Contractor, few laborers on site, a slowdown of work, and lack of a permanent Program Manager. (The previous Program Manager resigned in February 2018.) Also, Contractor Tutor-Perini questioned the tight schedule for testing, commissioning, and approvals necessary for full operation.

Chinatown merchants are getting insufficient aid. Although some financial help has been available, a business closure is priceless to its owner. Saddened by the demise of my favorite knick-knack store on Washington Street, I surveyed the shuttered businesses and recalled merchants' initial skepticism. In 2008 community meetings, merchants were told that they would not be impacted because subway work was all underground. Original drawings showed Washington Street partially/temporarily closed but not fully closed to both pedestrians and traffic. The original opening date of December 26, 2018 seemed plausible, especially after SFMTA decreased station lengths to maximum two-car trains (less capacity but cheaper), eliminated moving sidewalks, and reconfigured passageways.

What might have been: After the 1989 earthquake and Embarcadero Freeway demolition, Chinatown demanded transportation improvements. In hindsight, quicker transit enhancements like new bus routes, more service/night/weekend hours and a free bus loop—linking Moscone Center, Market Street, Chinatown, North Beach, Russian Hill, and Fisherman's Wharf would have worked.

What could have been avoided: A decade of construction impacts, business closures, rising land values, and displacement/gentrification threats as well as many MUNI service cuts resulting from the loss of hundreds of millions of dollars (in local matching funds) to the Central Subway.

Will we learn from the past?



Chinatown Station still not out of the ground

© HOWARD WONG, AIA



Chinatown businesses feel impacts.

© HOWARD WONG, AIA

JAN BLUM (1938-2019)

by Romalyn Schmaltz

North Beach, Telegraph Hill, and the whole City of San Francisco bid bon voyage to one of its fiercest advocates this spring with the passing of our dear friend and long-time THD member, Jan Blum.

I first met Jan as a fellow volunteer during the 2015 San Francisco campaign season, one that included races for Mayor and our District Three Supervisor, in addition to sundry ballot measures that were among the first to address income inequality and fair regulations of the burgeoning tech sector. Jan raved about the political T-shirt I was wearing, and when I made one and delivered it to her the following week, she marched on down to the second-hand clothing store on Grant Avenue and curated an entire outfit to go with it, texting me a photo of the ensemble with an almost-childlike excitement.

That summer and fall, I saw Jan everywhere, it seemed, and was in awe of her timeless, youthful enthusiasm, verve, and willingness to “tell it like it is” that were nevertheless matched, in rare form, by her kind optimism and boundless energy. I had no idea she was nearly in her eighties. As we found ourselves at more and more of the same events that summer and fall, I pretty much fell in love with Jan—I remember once at an opening at my gallery at the time, The North Beach Bauhaus, she was trying on hats that our partner Earl had recently made. She started calling up her friends, entreating them to “come down, join the party, check out the art, and buy some hats.” All told, we had some great sales that night due largely to Jan’s talent for disseminating her thrall for life.

Recently, I had the good fortune to speak with Jan’s niece’s wife, Tonja Petersen, of Murray, California, who opened my eyes even more to the fascinating force that Jan Blum truly was. Born in Seattle on January 11, 1938, Jan found herself in San Francisco working for Levi Strauss until she retired in the 1990s. According to Tonja, she was Executive Sales Manager of the coveted JC Penny account, among other roles. Despite her success in sales and public relations, Jan encountered the realities of the corporate glass ceiling. “She was a strong woman in a man’s world,” intoned Tonja over the phone. “She kind-of decided to get out of the corporate world and ask herself, ‘What else is out there?’”

Among the other things “out there” that captured Jan’s attention was a sign nearby reading, “Help plant Crissy Field,” the old U.S. Army airfield that the National Park Service took over in 1994. Jan worked with the Park Service in tandem with the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy to help restore the site, which was opened as a public waterfront recreation area in 2001. All told, Jan helped introduce more than 100,000 native plants into Crissy Field’s restored dunes and tidal marsh. Additionally, Jan was instrumental in removing much of the military waste in the Presidio.

“She always volunteered both her time and finances toward a future green society,” said Tonja. When she wasn’t literally out in the field, Jan could often be found brightening the doorways of City Hall, hitting the pavement for progressive campaigns and causes, and participating in various neighborhood association meetings and functions. “She had a way of stay-



Jan Blum

(COURTESY JAN BLUM’S FAMILY)

ing present without taking things personally,” Tonja added—an important attribute for an activist. Even after her passing, Jan entrusted much of her financial legacy to a variety of civic and environmental causes whose effects will be enjoyed by ensuing generations of San Franciscans. Early this year, it was announced that the Pollinator Gardens in the Presidio will be called ‘Jan Blum Memorial Park,’ with the groundbreaking to be set for July 2019. “When she found out, she was still fighting her cancer,” Tonja shared, “and it was like somebody had cured her for 24 hours.”

Another community member whom Jan worked with closely over the years has been our own District Three Supervisor Aaron Peskin. I invited Supervisor Peskin to chat about Jan at the Caffè Trieste during the North Beach Festival this past June. “Jan Blum mysteriously walked into my office shortly after I was elected supervisor the first time and asked if she could volunteer for me. What she did for the City was unimaginable, and we all have tried to figure out how she did all the very many things that she did.”

“Jan ran up against the glass ceiling yet was an assuming-yet-humble, profound human being who had supernatural powers that she used for the enhancement of people’s rights—people who have never been acknowledged by our society—and she ended that with an incredible move to turn an abandoned reservoir into a park,” Aaron reminisced fondly. “She worked

on a million things, and she did it in a very charming and disarming way. Jan had a way of befriending just about anybody she wanted to befriend. She was foxy, and she had moxie.”

And that shirt I made her four years ago? It was on display at her memorial service, although Jan declined to call it that.

Jan designed her own “Fiesta de Vida” before she passed—asking that it be a celebration in lieu of a more traditional memorial—which was held at the Presidio Officers’ Club on June 1, 2019. She requested lots of music and dancing rather than mournful eulogies, with longtime friend Greg Moore being the only official speaker. There, guests were encouraged to share their memories and testimonials of their fearless, feisty friend and fighter. While too numerous to print, they beautifully reinforce the singularity that was “The Jan Blum Experience,” reminding us that it’s fine folks like Jan, who, by being seemingly everywhere at once, connect us all as friends, neighbors, and stewards of our communities and cultures—in North Beach and Telegraph Hill, at our parks and on our beaches, and far beyond.

Jan Blum is survived by her sister, Judy Pesciotta; her nephew, Jeff Pesciotta; her niece, Jana Pesciotta; Jana’s wife, Tonja Peterson. She was preceded in death by her sister Jill. She was officially honored shortly after her passing at a San Francisco Board of Supervisors meeting.



Jan at Pacific Ocean

(COURTESY JAN BLUM’S FAMILY)



Jan Blum

(COURTESY JAN BLUM’S FAMILY)

GIGI FIORUCCI: A NORTH BEACH ORIGINAL

by Charles Versaggi

Based on a photo essay, “One Degree of Separation and a Bicycle,” (*The Bold Italic*, 2018) by Charles Versaggi, a native of North Beach. Contact: charlesversaggi@me.com

Everybody in North Beach knows Gigi — at least everyone within shouting distance of Caffè Trieste.

“Gigi!” bursts a voice from a passerby that echoes in the narrows of Grant Avenue.

“Buon giorno! How are you?!” Gigi replies with a raspy-voiced accent, reminiscent of Jersey Italian, in a conversation that sounds like a shouting match. “Where YOU go’n! You look good, man. You don’t have a baseball team now? Come’on!”

The early morning sun is burning through a brisk summer fog and the Italian air of espresso at Caffè Trieste. I’m sitting at an outside table across from Gigi Fiorucci, 74, a first-generation Italian from Le Marche (‘lay mar kay’), who’s lived most of his life in North Beach since his arrival as a young boy in 1956. Gigi and I are getting acquainted over double cappuccinos. Behind him is a large photo of young Giovanni ‘Pappa Gianni’ Giotta and his wife Ida when they founded Caffè Trieste in 1956.

“So, I know all these fucking crazy people here,” he tells me, cussing a blue streak that would steam a nun’s habit at SS Peter & Paul Salesian School nearby.

Restaurateur, raconteur, rapscallion, and irascible. These are a few words that begin to describe Gigi, a hard-working, street-smart businessman who’s owned 14 restaurants, at last counting, including the now-shuttered Caesar’s at Powell and Bay Streets.

Gigi, whose wife Phyllis died in 1997, lives alone a block away on Green Street in a 22-room single-room-occupancy (SRO) building, once catering to Italian immigrants, that he bought and restored in 2003. During prohibition, it was a winery and cigar store. It’s also the home of Sotto Mare (‘under the sea’), a seafood restaurant he once co-owned and operated with his longtime friend Rich Azzolino, a second-generation Italian who now owns the popular eatery with his wife, Laura.

When Gigi arrived at the age of 10 with his mother, North Beach was *Little Italy* to about 30,000 Italians. SS Peter & Paul Church, the ‘Italian Cathedral of the West,’ was the center of *Italianita* and the preserver of Italian language and culture. The Sicilian language (not an Italian dialect), as well as Italian dialects from Genoa, Tuscany, Naples, and Calabria could be heard in Washington Square Park (that the locals called ‘Il Giardino,’ The Garden) and the surrounding community of family-owned markets, pharmacies, and eateries. Most are no longer there.

By the mid-1950s, second-generation Italian-Americans were already leaving North Beach for other parts of the Bay Area to establish families of their own. At the same time, the character of the neighborhood was evolving with the influx of Asians.

Gigi’s family of five initially lived in a two-bedroom flat at 100 Varennes Street, off Union Street on Telegraph Hill. Later they moved to Powell Street, between Chestnut and Lombard Streets. Language and adapting to a new school and culture were the first of many challenges to overcome. “Soon after we arrived, I was just sitting quietly in the back of the first-grade class,” he said. “I couldn’t speak any English. It took me five-six months learning how to communicate.”

Fiorucci attended Garfield Elementary School, at the base of Coit Tower on Filbert Street; then he went for a few months to Francisco Junior High School before graduating from Sacred Heart High School in 1964. His first real job was at Caesar’s Italian Restaurant on the corner of Powell and Bay Streets, famous for its crab cioppino.

“During the ‘50s, a lot of Italians came to work here who would eventually become part of the restaurant scene,” Gigi said. “Everyone would help each other. That was the real North Beach.”



North Beach original, Gigi Fiorucci. Behind him is a photo of young “Pappa Gianni” Giotta and his wife Ida, founders of Caffè Trieste in 1956, the year Gigi arrived as an immigrant from Italy.

© CHARLES VERSAGGI

Gigi was good friends with Gianfranco, son of Pappa Gianni. “Me and Gianfranco worked as dishwashers at Caesar’s in 1958, 1959,” Gigi continued. “We were about 14 years old—that’s where I learned how to cook and learned my restaurant trade.”

Little Italy had dozens of places like Caesar’s — the Montclair, the San Remo, the New Pisa, the Gold Spike, the U.S. Restaurant, and Capp’s Corner—where tourists would mingle with locals to share a table, a bread basket, and a bottle of house red wine. But Caesar’s was the venerable dining room for local Italians to celebrate holidays, weddings, First Holy Communions, and Sunday dinners with family and friends.

Gigi and I walked to his building on Green Street and Jasper Alley, where he showed me a mural honoring Dante Benedetti, another North Beach original. Although Benedetti was an amateur boxer who won 89 fights, most of all, he loved baseball, knew all the famous players, and almost became as big a local legend as his friend and hero Joe DiMaggio. The two would play stickball in the alley when they were snot-nosed kids.

The son of an Italian immigrant from Lucca, Dante was born in 1919 in a flat on 27 Jasper Alley, behind Sotto Mare’s. He and his father would become the owners of the restaurant building when it was the site of the New Pisa restaurant in the late 1920s.

After being expelled for fighting from Galileo and Commerce High Schools, he channeled his pugilistic temperament, graduated from St. Ignatius High School, and went to the University of San Francisco on a boxing scholarship. He served in the U.S. Coast Guard and the Marine Corps during World War II and took over the New Pisa from his father after the war.

After learning the University of San Francisco (USF) was threatening to drop baseball from its athletic program, Dante offered to coach the team for one dollar a year. Generous to a fault, he lived out his final years a pauper at the On Lok (Chinese) Senior Center on Broadway Street.

When Dante retired from coaching in 1980, the USF baseball diamond was dedicated in his name. Joe DiMaggio attended the ceremony and gave him the ultimate compliment: “When I refer to Dante Benedetti, I refer to him as Mr. Baseball.”

Dante died in 2005 at the age of 86. The old neighborhood still remembers him as the head of San Francisco’s Little League Baseball and as USF’s winningest baseball coach who touched the lives of thousands of inner-city kids.

Designed by Gigi and his long-time friend Don Russo, a San Francisco firefighter who played baseball for Dante, the Jasper Alley mural depicts a baseball game with rows of players facing a baseball diamond, each with his last name painted on the back of his jersey.

As we walk back, Gigi pauses a moment to show me an inscription on the upper left corner of the mural. It was Dante’s favorite Italian proverb:

“If you’re proud of where you come from, you’ll always know where you’re going. And take pride in all you do.”



Gigi points to a mural on the corner of Jasper Alley and Green St. honoring restaurateur and USF coach, Dante Benedetti. Dante played stickball down the street with his childhood friend Joe DiMaggio.

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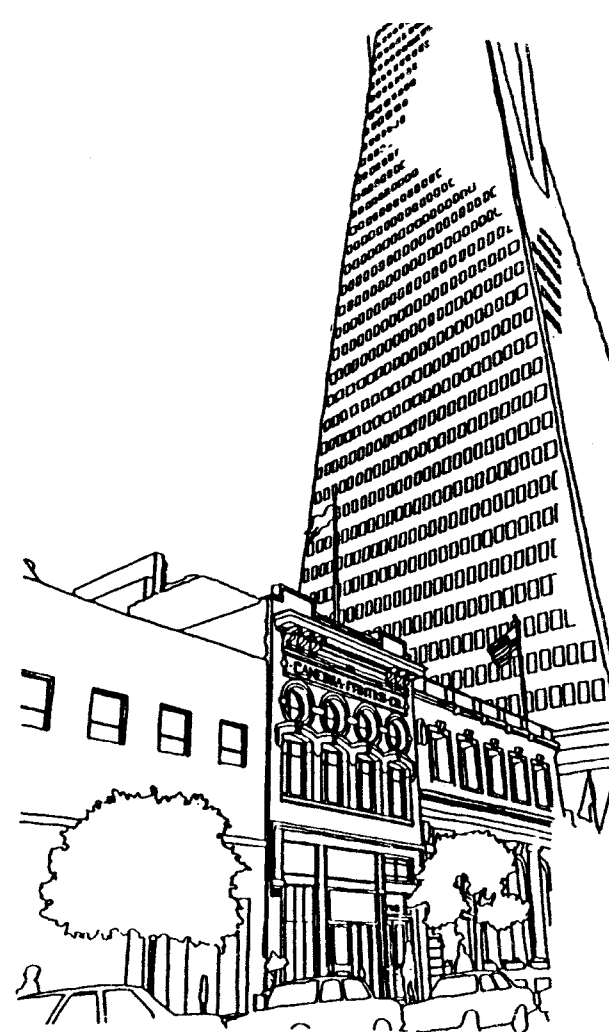
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WELCOME TO OUR NEW PHOTO EDITOR


THD welcomes David Lipkin as our new Photo Editor; this is his second issue of *The Semaphore* in that role. Corporate lawyer by day, amateur photographer by day and night, he and his wife Petrita moved to Telegraph Hill in 2010 and joined THD as new members last year. David has been photographing San Francisco since 1981. (His 1991 video of the Embarcadero Freeway just before its demolition played at our annual meeting.) Creating each issue is a collaborative undertaking, and we welcome David to our *Semaphore* team.



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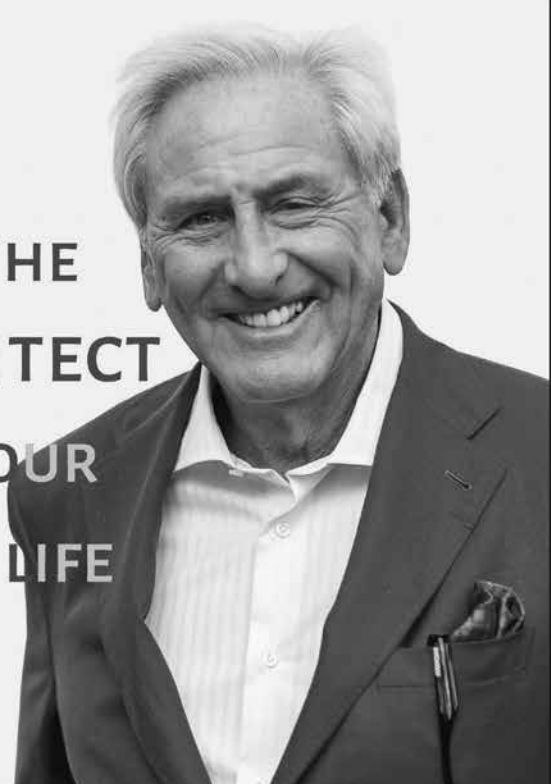
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WATERFRONT COMMITTEE REPORT

by Jon Golinger, Committee Chair
jon.golinger@thd.org

After a quiet period for waterfront development battles along San Francisco's waterfront, things are about to get very busy. Especially for the piers near Telegraph Hill.

In May, the San Francisco Port Commission directed its staff to proceed with issuing three formal Requests for Proposals in the coming months that could open up 10 publicly-owned piers along the Embarcadero to massive private development projects. The designated sites include six historic piers along the northern waterfront near Telegraph Hill—from the Exploratorium to the Alcatraz Island Ferry Terminal. If all of the potential development projects authorized by the Port Commission are formalized, approved, and built on these piers in the next few years, the end results could be the biggest transformational impact on San Francisco's waterfront in a generation.

This Fall, the first "Request for Proposals" solicitation will be for potential development on Piers 38 and 40 in the South Beach area; these are some of the oldest piers in San Francisco. Pier 40 currently is occupied by water recreation facilities, South Beach marina support services, and maritime storage uses. Pier 38 has been the site of multiple failed, large private-office development projects over the years and remains empty. It is unclear whether a private developer would be allowed to evict the water recreation, marina, and maritime functions currently at Pier 40.

The Port Commission directed staff to issue the second Request for Proposals solicitation by the end of 2019 for a potential developer of Piers 30-32, just south of the Bay Bridge. Piers 30-32 is a huge, open, non-historic pier that is primarily used for ship berthing, special events, and parking. It has been the site of numerous failed development plans over the years. Piers 30-32 was the initial location for the new Warriors stadium and for the George Lucas art museum, but both projects moved elsewhere due to public opposition or other

WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT ON THE HORIZON



Aerial view of San Francisco waterfront

(PHOTO COURTESY PORT OF SAN FRANCISCO)

issues. It is unclear what kind of development project the Port now intends to seek for Piers 30-32.

Finally, and directly relevant to Telegraph Hill, the Port Commission instructed its staff to issue a third Request for Proposals in early 2020 for six northern waterfront historic piers: Pier 19, Pier 19 ½, Pier 23, Pier 29, Pier 29 ½, and Pier 31. A Port staff memorandum indicated that these piers "are well-positioned for public-private partnership rehabilitation projects as these piers are projected to achieve financial feasibility while delivering multiple Trust benefits."

Because of their prime location, spectacular waterfront views, and preserved historic structures, the six Northern Piers are some of the most valuable pieces of real estate in San Francisco – perhaps in the world. The potential size and scale of this multi-pier waterfront development project along the Embarcadero near Telegraph Hill would be unprecedented. According

to the Port staff memorandum, the Northern Piers RFP will include "about 450,000 square feet of existing building square footage and project costs that could total \$450 million."

The question looming over one of the most massive development projects in San Francisco waterfront history is whether the priority for these unique public piers will be to maximize public access and public uses—such as the recreation, arts, and cultural uses called for by the Waterfront Plan and Waterfront Working Group—or whether the priority will once again be to maximize profits for private developers and to generate revenue for the Port. Given the bleak track record of a Port Commission populated by mayoral political appointees who are mostly developers, bankers, and real estate professionals (with no environmental, historic preservation, or neighborhood advocate representation at all), we should all watch carefully.



BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS APRIL—JUNE 2019

by Mary Lipian, Recording Secretary
mary.lipian@thd.org

April 2019

New Board Members

President Stan Hayes announced and welcomed new Board members: Rachel Rodriguez, Patrice Ignacio Moll, and Julia Martin Murphy.

Executive Committee

The bylaws specify that the executive committee consists of the president, vice-president, treasurer, and two board members elected by the Board for the sole purpose of "transacting emergency business which might arise between board meetings." After discussion, Judy Irving and Don Raichle were nominated and elected unanimously to fill the two positions.

Reauthorization of Special Committees

The Board reauthorized the Oral History, Art and Culture, and Communication Committees.

Current Chairs of the Committees:

Communications Committee – Chair Al Fontes

Transportation Committee – Co-Chairs Howard Wong and David Becker

Art and Culture Committee – Chair Romalyn Schmaltz

Planning and Zoning Committee – Co-Chairs Nancy Shanahan and Mary Lipian

Parks and Trees Committee – Chair Don Raichle

Waterfront Committee – Chair Jon Golinger

Oral History Committee – TBD

Liaisons with other organizations include:

Coalition for San Francisco Neighborhoods – TBD

Friends of Washington Square Liaison – Don Raichle

May 2019

THD 2019 Retreat and Brainstorming

Board members dedicated the May Board meeting to a brainstorming session focusing on what it wants to accomplish in the 2019-2020 term. At the retreat, the Board examined THD's mission statement: "to beautify and improve the hill, build community, protect the unique character of the hill, celebrate the hill's history and traditions, engage in city affairs, and, when necessary, stand up for the hill." The group decided that ideas generated at the meeting would be discussed at future Board meetings. Determining who would be responsible for certain goals and how the goals would be accomplished will be a priority.

June 2019

North Beach Fair

At the North Beach Fair (June 15-16), THD had a booth staffed primarily by board members. We sold THD t-shirts and hoodies. (Prior to the Fair, Sarah Kliban obtained a bid from a vendor for additional t-shirts and sweatshirts as our stock was getting low.

The board authorized the purchase.)

Proposed Ecotarium by Pier 39

At the June Board Meeting, George Jacob, President and CEO of Bayecotarium, presented a proposal to convert the Aquarium of the Bay into a high-tech, 80-foot-high Ecotarium. A canopy made of iridescent material would be placed over the structure, and there would be special effects inside the dome providing a theater experience for the visitors. Ticket prices would be in the range of \$35 per person, but there would be a program allowing school children to visit free of charge. Mr. Jacob hopes to have 250,000 children attend.

The canopy would be made of glass, so the Board asked that the reflectivity of the dome be addressed.

The Board reminded Mr. Jacob that due to the proposed height of the project, his proposal would need voter approval. The earliest the proposed project could go on the ballot would be November 2020.



Bay Ecotarium - View towards Telegraph Hill

(PHOTO COURTESY AQUARIUM OF THE BAY)



TREASURER'S REPORT

by Nick Ferris, THD Treasurer
treasurer@thd.org

As many readers know, THD operates on a fiscal year that runs from April 1 to March 31 and budgets for a breakeven year. To date, we have a net income of \$6,896.16, projected to decrease over the course of the year.

Looking back at the past year as Treasurer, I've had the pleasure of monitoring every dollar spent and have been impressed by the frugality of its officers. Our largest financial expense is the production of this publication, which serves as a mini-newspaper for many residents but also as a journal and recordholder of the neighborhood's activities.

We are continually looking for new revenue streams and ways to serve the neighborhood. If you'd like to be a part of the discussion, I encourage you to get involved and join one of our committees! ✂



Seeing how the "sausage" is made

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PLANNING & ZONING COMMITTEE MEETS last Thursdays.
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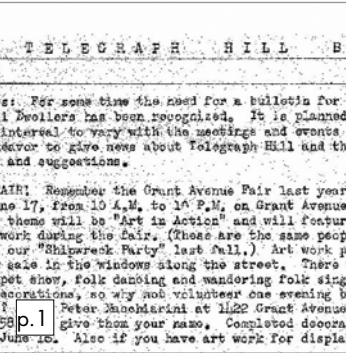
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THE SEMAPHORE #226 Summer 2019

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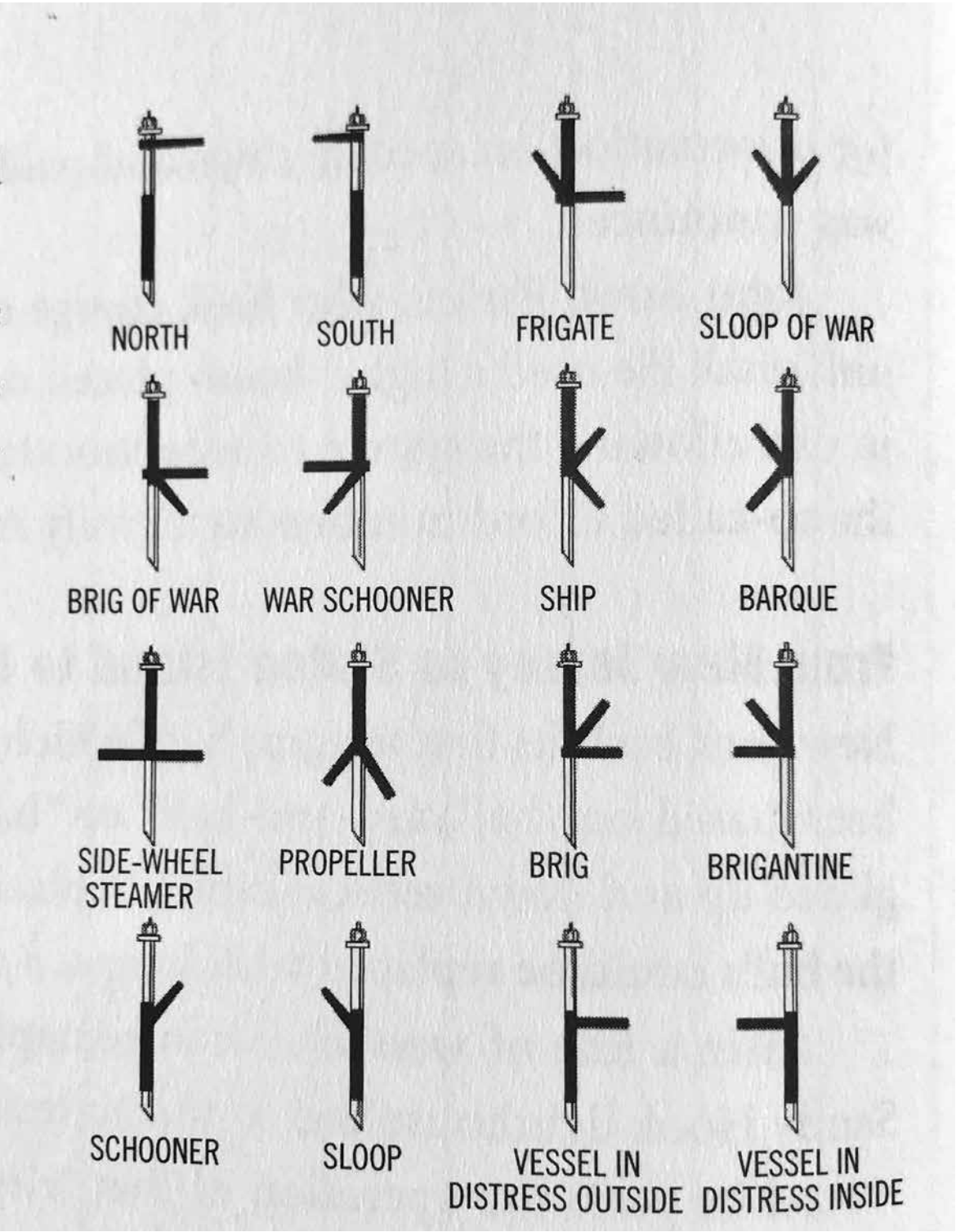
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Issue 226 Summer 2019



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